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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to preserve oral tradition and produce a history about the Blackfeet people, Tom Many Guns relates the story of his life and, in so doing, brings out the rich cultural heritage of the Blackfeet. The recollections were gathered through interviews and translated from Blackfeet to English using every effort to preserve Tom Many Guns' narrative style. Tom's stories reveal a bit of his earlier years while growing up on the Reservation. Born on December 20, 1891, and raised by his grandparents, he heard many stories from them and other elderly Blackfeet. Incidents and activities described include participation in the medicine lodge ceremonies to cure the sick, how his father took a black horse in broad daylight from the enemy Crows, making berry soup with blood of game they had killed, singing around the camp to signal the formation of a war party, fencing of the Blackfeet Reservation by the federal government, building of the Great Northern Railroad across the Reservation, the woman who married the buffalo, and the story of coyote man. Illustrations by Blackfeet artist Wilbur Blackweasel contribute visual impact to many of the stories. (NEC)

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PINTO HORSE RIDER

By

Tom Many Guns

Illustration by Wilbur Black Weasel
Photos by: Joe Fisher

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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PINTO HORSE RIDER

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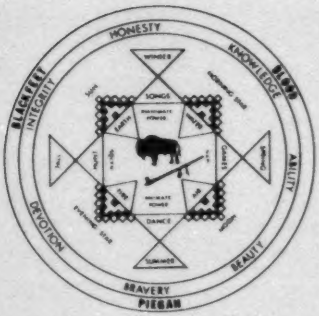
Dedicated to our Elderly Blackfeet People, for the knowledge they have passed on to their children.



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Introduction

In 1969-1970, Operation Mainstream, a program that employs elderly Blackfeet, began to gather information in an effort to produce a history about the Blackfeet people.

Clifford Kicking Woman, with help from his father, George Kicking Woman, began gathering information through interviews from Henry Little Dog, Richard Little Dog, Charlie Horn, Tom Many Guns, Sam New Breast, Joe Eagle Child and Jim Reevis.

The stories were translated from Blackfeet to English into workable transcripts by Clifford and George, but due to a lack of funds the book was not produced.

In the early months of 1979, the Blackfeet Heritage Program obtained copies of the stories, reviewed the materials and asked permission of the Mainstream Program to print the stories of Tom Many Guns.

The Heritage Program then sought permission from Mr. Many Guns to print his stories. Mr. Many Guns consented and worked closely with the Heritage Program in publishing the stories.

Tom's stories reveal a "bit" of his earlier years while growing up on the Reservation. Raised by his grandparents, he heard many stories from them and other elderly Blackfeet people. Tom's stories bring out the rich cultural heritage of the Blackfeet that has been preserved through our oral traditions.

The elderly people told and retold stories to Tom, relating to him an early life when the Blackfeet Nation consisting of the Pikuni (Piegan); Kainai (Bloods); and Siksika (Blackfoot) was the dominant people of the northern plains.

But the dominancy of the Blackfeet began to diminish along with our land base as the advance of the white civilization pushed westward across North America. Being pushed westward against the Rocky

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Mountains into a corner left an impact on the Blackfeet language as can be seen from Tom's stories when he refers to the Corner Pikuni.

Another fact that left an impact on our language was the region in which the Blackfeet lived, the northern plains. Tom refers to landmarks the way early Blackfeet saw them, for example: Black Springs, Red Paint Coulee and Circle Brush. The maps appearing on pages 34-35 are drawn to show the reader the way early Blackfeet viewed their surroundings. (Without political boundaries.)

Early Blackfeet were a nomadic, prairie people. Frequently being out on the prairie, with no wood to burn, they used buffalo chips for fuel. Because of this practice the people often called themselves Buffalo Chip People which refers to a Prairie People.

The Blackfeet Heritage Program felt it was important to preserve Tom's narrative style and by choice left the style as untouched as possible. In doing so, the Heritage Program feels it has contributed a part in preserving the oral tradition by intertwining Blackfeet ways into the contemporary world of today.

The Life of Tom Many Guns

I am going to tell about my life. I was born along the Cut Bank River at the home of an old man by the name of Home Gun. His place was located close to the ridge towards the mountains. He was our neighbor.

The little log cabin where I was born is still standing. In the year 1894, Mr. Sherburne built a store in Browning. And that same year the Government built a canal near where a man by the name of After Buffalo lived. That is when I was born, that year.

My old man, my father, often worked for old Levi Burd, who called him his young brother. I was four years old at that time.

When I was the age of seven, the Government started to fence the Reservation. When the fencing reached as far as what was called Fisher Flats in 1902, that was the year I went to Holy Family Mission to school. I lived with my grandparents. The name of my grandmother was Blackfoot Woman and my grandfather was Big Lake. My elders brought me up.

Curley Bear and Sharp Ribs took me to the Mission to school. They were brothers of mine. I did not know any English when I entered the Mission so I had an interpreter. He was Chief Talk. He is still living. Mr. William Spanish is his other name*.

And also Joe Boss Ribs came that year to the Mission School. Like me, he did not know English and he wore old blanket pants and his hair was in braids. And for myself, my brothers bought me some knee pants. **We wore knee pants in those days.**

When I was being brought into the building my friend, Joe Boss Ribs, was with me. We entered the school. As we sat down the teacher gave us what was called a chart with words and numbers on it. We were to learn to read those words and numbers. When we

*At the time these stores were recorded, Mr. Spanish was still living. He has since passed away.

could not remember a word or number, we got a hit on the head with something such as a ruler or book. That was how we learned our ABC's, beginners' letters.

I stayed the school year at Holy Family Mission and in that summer I went to the place of my grandmother. And from there, every fall, I would go back to school. I went to school at the mission four years.

I was taken to Cut Bank Boarding School in 1903, the same year a man by the name of Many Saved Alone was killed*.

When I was at that Cut Bank Boarding School some of my friends were what people called halfbreeds. The names of those boys were Guardipees, George Thomas, Charlie Ell, and others.

My friends, the fullbloods, used to say that I spent too much time with halfbreeds. So one day I told these friends such as the Guardipees what the fullblood friends were saying. The halfbreeds told me not to hang around the fullbloods. And they also said, "The Indian boys are telling on us. They are saying that we go where we are told not to go, to make coffee and tea and cook food." And they told me not to go around with the Indian boys, to be on the safe side.

When that spring came, I was almost all alone at the school. No one came after me to take me to the place of my grandparents. Noble Bennett also was at the school at the time. We had nothing to do. Then I looked up one day and I saw a buggy with one horse pulling it. My friend, Noble Bennett, said to me, "It is my grandma." **Her Indian name was Yellow Bird Woman. She was Old Lady Kipp.**

So from the Cut Bank Boarding School I caught a ride with Noble Bennett and his grandmother to Browning. They let me off by the building called the

*Everyone was scared after the mysterious death of Many Saved Alone. Tom was sent to Cut Bank Boarding School as it was closer to town, in case anything happened.

ration house. Close by were houses for workmen, called in Indian "A Long Building." They were in long rows.

After I got into town an Old Lady asked me the names of my relations. I told her my people were Wolf Tails. My mother came from that family. Some of my relations, I told her, live near the Home Guns. The people there by Holy Family Mission, are called the Buffalo People. They are also my people.

So, this old lady took me to a long building to visit some people until my grandmother came to take me with her to where she lived near the old Holy Family Mission.

When school time came again, I went back to Mission school. My brother asked me why I did not want to go back to Cut Bank School and I explained why I did not want to go back there: That I was disliked by my fullblood friends and relations. I said, "They are on the jealous side. They are fullbloods like me, so I don't see why they pick on me so bad."

So I made my stay at the Mission and started back to school there, reading a lot about God and was taught most of the time about the church. **As we know, the priests came from across the Great Waters and brought the prayers to this side of the Great Waters.**

I was at Mission School for eight years but I only went as far as the fourth grade. The reason for that, I was taught mostly catechisms and about the Bible. I read a lot about why God was on the cross and I learned about how He was marched with His cross and how He was nailed to the cross. Those are the things I learned at Mission School. I never did give up my Indian beliefs.

At the time I left Mission School the people were taking their horses to a dipping place at Cut Bank Bridge. It was the time I went back to the home of my elders, near the Mission — to take care of some cattle that had gone back to where they had been

bought. My brother-in-law — his name was Calf Looking — was drinking at the time. He was not taking care of the cattle.

After I took care of the cattle, I moved to Running Cranes where they were building a ditch. That was the year of 1915, in the fall, and my father said, "You are not going away to school. You are staying with me."

I left the family of my father to stay with people known as the Black Doorways. My brother came after me to go to Many Black Tail to work as a teamster with a plow. **The name of my brother was Curley Bear.** There I started to work with John Beaver. He was working there, driving a team with what is called a fresno. I was driving a team with my brother. From there I went to what is now called Little Badger. I liked it there.

I heard the Government was building a road from Little Badger to Glacier Park. I went to work there at that time, building the road on this side of Two Medicine. Again I was driving a team working a fresno. I had two buckskins and two blacks on the fresno.

I must close for the time. I still have more to tell but I will stop for now, I have lived a long life.

My Other Name

I am going to tell you what white people wonder about and that is how I got my name Many Guns and also my other name*.

Once old man Many Guns and White Quiver went on a war party. Altogether there were four in this party. **The two I mentioned by name were well-known.**

Going down along Missouri River on the war party, they spotted the enemy, and immediately they hid in the brush nearby.

The enemy was moving camp. They were getting ready to cross the river by tying logs together — making a raft. As the enemy put their clothes and the rest of their things on the raft — just as they were about to jump in the river — one of the Blackfeet Chiefs shot at them. So, the enemy jumped into the water without their raft as there was not time to get on it. At that time Many Guns struck each and every one of the enemy, counting coup on them with a stick.

My grandfather got the name Many Guns from that war party, and he was also known as Big Lake. These names were given to me.

After this war party took what they wanted from the enemies' belongings they threw the rest in the river and went on East.

One night, during these travels, Many Guns had a dream. He dreamed of finding horses and taking a Pinto for his own.

The next morning — early — the party was on

*Blackfeet people often had two or three names. A person might be named for some great or unusual deed from their family history. Later, other names could be taken as they gained personal honors. During the reservation period as census' were compiled, families took the head of households name as their surname along with English first names. Each family continued to give Indian names to their children and this is how they were commonly known in the Indian community.

its way again. They got to a place now known as Poplar. There they came upon some horses tied together.

My grandfather spotted a pinto horse amongst them. He cut their ropes, freeing them. Then he jumped on one of the horses. It was the pinto horse.

That is how I got my other name: Pinto Rider.

About the Blackfeet People

Okee!* I am going to tell a story about the Blackfeet that I was told by the older people of long ago.

There was nothing but the Indian on this island.** The white man just came across the Great Water to this Island. Our people away back, before they were called Blackfeet, were called Pikuni.*** There were four bands of Pikuni. Because they were all Blackfeet, they spoke the same language.

When the governments of the United States and Canada drew the so-called line, or the border line, we were separated from many of our people and relatives. We are all related.

After that, there were leaders from each band, who took their people to where they live today.

After the separation, the South Pikuni — the Montana Blackfeet — stayed where they are today. The reason why they are called by that name, Pikuni, is they were not good tanners. The skins they tanned were not worked over and were not clean.

At that time, the leaders of the North Blackfeet were taking their people north to what is called Box Creek. And the Bloods, who are called the Blood People, were taken by their leaders to where they live today.

And some of the Corner Pikuni☆ were taken where they are today by their leaders. They are our close relatives. They were taken to a place called Crow Painted Teepee.**** The leader and chief, his name was He Was Hooked, told me this story.

People that talk the same language, some of them are in what is now called Canada, are all related. I have a lot of relations in Canada, myself. We call this group of people, the Blackfeet: Buffalo Chip People.☆☆ Descendents of the real Blackfeet people.

*A Blackfeet word in greeting another person or to start a story.

**Refers to the continent of North America.

***Pikuni translated into English means "Poor robes." English pronunciation is Piegans.

****Old Man River, Alberta Canada.

Editor's note: ⋆ The term corner Pikuni is a reference by the Pikuni that addresses how the Blackfeet Nation once controlled a vast area of land in what is now Montana, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Slowly their land diminished by the advancing white civilization and they were pushed westward against the mountains into a "corner."

⋆⋆ Buffalo Chip People is an old Blackfeet expression that addresses the fact of the Blackfeet being out on the Prairie where frequently there was no wood to burn for fuel so buffalo chips were used. Buffalo Chip People refers to a nomadic Prairie People.

Medicine Lodge

I am going to tell about the Medicine Lodge, the way I saw it and was involved in it.

Once at Little Badger, Old Lady Wolf Plume — her Indian name was Striking At First — was looking for someone to sit in the Medicine Lodge with her husband, to help with singing and help with the Ceremonial.

The old lady called in some persons but they refused because they felt unworthy to participate in the Medicine Lodge Ceremonial. She called on Old Man White Antelope and me, but we refused her. My grandmother told me not to turn down any Medicine Man or Medicine Woman when they asked a person to take part in a religious duty. **It is an honor to be asked.** She told me to take part with Old Man Wolf Plume who was to put up this Medicine Lodge.

So I sat in the teepee with Wolf Plume and others. I was helping all I could. Old Man Swims Under was leading in this Medicine Teepee. He knew all the songs. And while I was helping, Old Swims Under handed down to me sacred things such as an Indian name, a Medicine Lodge Necklace, the Tail of a Mountain Lion and Crow Tailfeathers.

Swims Under made signs to show me what to do. Old Lady Wolf plume was sitting there and I was painted black. Before I was painted, they fixed a place for me to sit inside the Lodge. Some blankets were held around me while I was painted.

I sat in the Lodge for four days so I could have a successful life for a long time. **What I did those four days shows how I believe in our Indian way of life — I accept our Indian way of life.**

Right after this, the sacred things were set and the people inside were ready to come out to a little place.

A teepee was set up next to the Medicine Lodge. I was given a black blanket to cover myself with and

Old Lady Wolf Plume was there, too. I had wild rhubarb to lie down on.

While we were in this teepee, the sick people were brought in. The people had made pledges to bring some cloth goods tied to a stick. These were to be offered to the Sun Spirit. And when the center pole was put up, these cloth goods were tied to the center pole and put up with the pole. The people carried a pipe. They gave the pipe to the Medicine Man. The Medicine Man said a prayer. And the people laid their cloth goods by the old man — those that were to be tied on the poles.

When the Ceremony was almost done, those that had made their pledges all sat in a single row, and Old Man Swims Under started his blessings by singing the songs that go along with the cloth goods tied to the center pole. And after that the cloth was called things for the Sun.

Then, the sacred rawhide bundle where the dried meat and tongue were kept — were placed in the center and this bundle was not to be opened at that time. **The bundle has to be handled by someone who had been on a war party or someone who had performed another great deed.** Then the bundle was opened. The old ladies who cut the Sacred Tongue formed a line. The first one was First Striking Wolf Plume and the others were Pretty Woman Double Runner and Old Lady Old Chief and a fourth woman. They faced the Sun and confessed to it. Then those, who had given pledges along with their goods tied to the pole, were given pieces of Sacred Tongue.

Next the people of the Crazy Dog Society came forward. The Sacred Rawhide was placed for those who pledged to do the stripping — by cutting the hide into strips to be used to tie the long poles to the center pole. The ones who pledged were told to kneel before the one who was going to show them how to cut the hide. **This man had to be a man who could tell of some great deed before the hide was cut.** The people who cut the hide had earned this privilege.

From there I was taken to the Medicine Lodge where the center pole was, the old men all in a circle around it. I was given a blanket to put around me and a pin to fasten the blanket around my neck.

These old men laid their hands on the center pole, and they shook it four times before they blew their eagle bone whistles. This meant that the center pole was ready to be raised and the rest of the Medicine Lodge was ready to set up. **I was on top of the center pole that was lying down, and just before it was raised I was told to jump down and leave my blanket on the pole.** Using lodge poles tied together, the people helped to raise the center pole. There was a lot of help when this took place.

While that happened, victory cries were shouted. People shouted to show they were glad nothing bad happened to the center pole when it was being put up.

I was taken to my teepee where all I heard was noise. As I said, all this shouting meant happiness and the people were enjoying the event.

And that was the end. That is what I understand about the Medicine Lodge.

I Look Like My Father

I am going to tell about my father and how sometimes people mistake me for him. My father died in the year 1922 and his wife died later — around Thanksgiving of the same year. After they died, I stayed around Little Badger.

I was lonesome for my father one day, so I went down to visit Mr. Bill Show. After I sold him my grain from last year, I rode away. I was riding a black horse, and when I got to the place of Old Man Middle Rider he asked me, "Where are you going?" I said nothing. **By the way, when I was standing there I saw an old saddle belonging to Old Lady Middle Rider.** So, I took the saddle of Old Lady Middle Rider. Rider, put it on my horse and rode back to the place of Bill Show. He was just about to leave for town, and he asked me if I wanted to go along. I said yes. Two bay horses were hitched to a buggy and I tied my horse to one of the hitched horses on the side of the collar.

When we got to Browning, the first thing we did was put our horses in the barn. The barn was owned by a man named First One. Bill asked me how much I wanted for my saddle. I answered, "Twenty-five dollars." Then Bill asked me, "What are you going to do with this money?" and I said, "I am going down to Hagerty Hotel and sleep."

The next day, I decided to go to Canada. I borrowed a blanket for my horse because I did not have a saddle. Then I got on my horse and I slowly rode towards Cut Bank River. When I got to the place of Chas Wolf Tail, his wife, called Blue Eyes, asked, "Where are you going?" I said, "Canada," and she laughed at me. I slept at Wolf Tails, and the next day I headed north until I got to this side of the ranch of Jack Galbreath, his Indain name is Hundred Bear. As it was getting late in the day, I went down the hill to the place of Hundred Bear. They were very glad to see me and invited me to stay awhile. The sun was still up.

I slept there and the next morning I started north, traveling towards Canada. When I reached the Canadian border an officer checked my horse and the brand. And he told me, "When you come back through, you can show these papers."

I went on north to Cardston. And when I got there, I went to a cafe called Old Chief. There I met a friend of mine. He asked me, "Do you want to come out here a little ways by our agency? I told him yes and we rode together on a buggy. **My horse was tied on the side of one of his horses.** Later, we met another friend of mine who called to me, mistaking me for my father. He was very glad to see me.

From there, I went on north towards Brockett until I came upon another man, who also mistook me for my father. His name was Little Leaf. He asked me if I wanted to go to his house, and we did. Then, he invited me to stay. Later on, he told me there was a dance at Brockett. So we decided to go and watch the dance and meet some of our friends, such as Tom Bear and others.

When the dance broke up, I checked the gifts of money that were given to me, a visitor. They added up to sixty dollars. Little Leaf advised me to go on home as now I had money to travel. So I started back to Cardston.

On the way back to Cardston, I met another friend. His name was Yellow Feet, and he asked me to stay with him. He told me, "Your horse is too big for you. I have a horse that you will want to trade with me." After we traded, we went to his house for awhile and then went on to a dance. The next day, I tried my new horse. He was sure a good horse.

Spring was getting near. My friend asked me, "How are you going to get your horse across the border?" "I will get across," I said. Then I started south towards home. **When I came to Cardston the first thing I thought of was to get some wire cutters for three dollars.**

I went on towards home until I came to a river that was frozen and then I got off the horse and led him across the ice.

South of there, I came to five strands of wire which I cut and made my way across the border.

From there, I then rode as fast as I could until I came to the Galbreath place. The very next day, I started back to the place of Chas Wolf Tail. Then on to Browning and on to my home near Little Badger.

When I got home, there was some bad news. My good friend was very sick and was getting Indian doctoring.

This ended my happy trip to Canada, and I was a little lonesome in some ways.

How My Father Took the Black Horse

Okee! I am going to tell you a short story about my father, when he took a black horse in broad daylight from the enemy. When he started on a war party there were four of them. They traveled along the mountains until another joined the party and that made five of them.

They were between Great Falls and Fort Benton when they crossed the Missouri River. They were on the way for two days, hunting deer, and making dry meat and picking berries.

So they went on from there to the Crows. When they got to a big encampment of the Crows, they went up a high hill where they waited. After awhile, Many Guns said to another man, "Look! See that teepee with the black horse tied by the door. I am going down there to get the horse that is tied by the teepee of the chief."

So Many Guns got ready and went down the hill towards the camps. When he got outside the camps, he could see the teepee of the chief was in center of the camps. While Many Guns was standing there, he put on his hooded blanket coat and started for the teepee in the center of the camps.

The people standing around did not even notice him. So Many Guns walked up to the black horse by the doorway. He untied it. He put his bridle on the horse. He got on the black horse and he headed out of the camp. Then the people at the camp noticed him and everyone got very excited. When the people were about to chase after Many Guns, the Crow chief jumped up. "Never mind," he told his people. He said, "As you know, that black horse is a real fast horse. We will not be able to catch up with him. Let him go! It is hard to tell, but maybe a big number of Blackfeet are camping over the hill."

Then the chief said, "If we follow the black horse, we might have a battle with the Blackfeet and

they would kill many of us Crows." From there my father, Many Guns, brought the black horse home.

This was a very brave deed that Many Guns did.

In those days, when a man did such a deed, he had every right to unwrap the sacred tongues that are in the Medicine Bundles — the sacred tongue that is used when the Medicine Lodge is put up. The Medicine Bundles are made from sacred rawhide. This is what my father used to tell me. That he had every right to do any of the sacred things they did in the Medicine Lodge, because he took the black horse from the Crows.

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Bad Luck Comes To Many Guns

Okee! I am going to tell you a story about my old man.

One day, Bear Chief and Many Guns started toward Crow country, going the long way. When they sat down to rest, one of them took field glasses to look back to where they had come from. Then, one of them said, "Look! There are two riders following us." The other one looked through the field glasses and recognized the riders as Green Grass Bull and White Quiver. Many Guns and Bear Chief agreed it was very nice of them to come.

When the two came, they were a little ashamed of the leader, Bear Chief*. Anyway, they were told, "It is all right. There will be four of us to go." So, all four started together on their way to the Crows.

When they got to this side of the Crow Reservation they hid in the brush until it got a little darker. They watched the horses of the Crow until the animals moved down aways from the camps. Then the Blackfeet warriors ran down and caught the horses and turned back the rest of the herd. They were mad.

The four traveled through that night and the next day, until they got to this place, called Two Figures. That is where they stopped for the night with their stolen horses — a small herd.

The next day, they advanced towards a place, called Where you Go Over. **It is west of what is now the city of Great Falls.** They dicided to stop there for the night so they fixed their camp and did a little hunting while they were there. And the next day got ready to start again for home.

Many Guns and Green Grass Bull were the only two of the four who picketed their horses. Bear Chief told the others to go and round up the horses they had taken from the Crows. But when they looked for them they could not find any of them.

*Embarrassed to be in his presence.

Then Many Guns went out alone to look for the other horses. He got to this hill, and he went over and followed the river. He saw a rider going west. Then he thought the Crows had caught up with the Blackfeet party. He continued on until he came to a coulee.

In the meantime, the enemy were laying for him on a ridge.

Many Guns looked and saw the small head of somebody peeping over the ridge. The face was a dark face. When Many Guns saw this head and face of a person, he also heard someone calling to somebody. He thought that the person looking over the ridge was the one he heard calling. So he turned around and started to ride back the way he had come.

While he was riding through a coulee he could hear noises behind him and people shouting, but he kept on going. The horse of Many Guns was a fast horse.

As he rode over a hill a bullet hit his horse. Many Guns jumped off and ran to a rotten old tree. He crawled inside this big old log. He could feel horses jumping over the log. The enemy was chasing an empty horse. Many Guns knew this because he had peeked out of his hiding place. He also realized that the men chasing him were Kootenais.

He was praying for his safety. He pledged he would get a cross and a small bottle of holy water. The River People*, he said to himself, are my friends. Soon there was no sound and Many Guns took this to mean the Kootenais had gone back home.

The Kootenais, Many Guns found out later, took all the horses the Blackfeet party stole from the Crows. And they captured Bear Chief and Green Grass Bull. But one of the Kootenai said to the others, "Let them go — they are our neighbors — but we will keep the horses." But that night, Many Guns stole back a horse from the Kootenais.

*Roman Catholic Missionaries.

Then he started for home, traveling all night until he saw a light in a tent of a sheepherder. **The sheepherder had two saddle horses.** Many Guns decided to exchange horses.

He opened the gate to the corral of the sheepherder and got on a fast horse. Many Guns rode along until he came to a stream. He wanted a drink of water. But when he stepped down from the horse, the horse spooked and ran backwards.

Finally, Many Guns had to let go of the rawhide rope. He was afoot again. Still, he tried to catch the saddle horse, but the animal ran faster and faster. Many Guns gave up. He started west after he lost track of the horse.

I cannot say what bad luck I had in my life, but that was the worst. That was what Old Man Many Guns thought, from that time on.

After he walked a ways, Many Guns came to a place where people had camped. He found some meat and good fat that had been left behind. He cut one piece and tasted it. It tasted bitter. So he cut the outside off and cooked the inside pieces.

Then Many Guns went to a camp where he knew the people, and he told what had happened. **While Many Guns was at this home he saw the woman make a face while he was talking. It was poison meat.**

So the woman put butter on the fire to melt. Then she gave it to Many Guns to drink. "Take this," she said, "and you will be alright."

Many Guns never had luck as bad as that one time.

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The Bay Horse of Many Guns

My old man had good friends among the Flatheads. They were such good friends one time he put on a Ceremonial Lodge to pray that his friends would have good luck when they traveled back and forth on their visits.

One particular time, he was planning on going over to visit his friends, the Flatheads. At that same time, a man — by the name of Rugged Lodge — and others went over the mountains, and my old man went along with them.

My old man was invited to come and visit by his friend, **or his partner.** The people went by way of what they call the Blackfoot River, through the pass*. They went there to the Flathead Reservation to dance and visit.

So when they got there he met his friend. They looked alike, my old man, Many Guns, and this Flathead.

The friend told my old man the horses are in the corral. And he gave my old man a horse with an ear split on the left side. This man told my old man that this horse, a bay horse, never was beaten in a distance run. This man told my dad, "You can have it and take it home with you." So my old man took the horse with him and the group went back over the mountain.

After they returned to the Blackfeet Reservation, they went on down to Birch Creek. There they tried the bay horse, to see how fast he could run. He ran good.

The next place where they had a test run was at Sun River. From there my old man took the horse to run at Holy Family Mission.

About the only time my old man used this certain horse was when there was Fourth of July Celebration or another special gathering.

*Today the pass is known as Rodgers Pass.

This horse with the ear split was a very good horse. Many times I saw him run. The bay horse was a well-formed horse.

My old man thought a lot of this horse. He used it to show it off. He used it when the people went after the willows for a Sweat Lodge during the annual Medicine Lodge. The reason it usually took the lead was that the bay horse was the prettiest and best-looking horse of the whole outfit.

SI-KSI-KAY-TSI-TA-PI SIM-MA-KI-SIM
NITA-TA-TSI KI MI-STA-KI-TSI
BLACKFEET LANGUAGE MAP
RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS

MI-SIM-SIKI-SI-SA-TAH - Striped Face River - Badger Creek

KA-YO-TSI-I-STA-KI-TSI - Bear Head Mountains - Bear Paw Mountains

MO-KO-MAH-SI-SA-TAH - The Belly River - Belly River

SI-KO-KI-MI-SI-SA-TAH - Birch Creek

I-TSI-KA-SI-SA-TAH - Fighting River - Battle River

SI-YO-POW-KO-YI - Bank Going Towards the River - Bow River

BO-MA-KI-KSI-TA-TAH - Bank That Is Cut - Cut Bank Creek

I-YI-KI-MI-KO - Divided Hills - Cypress Hills

OO-TAH-KWI-I-STA-KI-KSI - Yellow Mountains - Judith Mountains

OO-TAH-KWI-SI-SA-TAH - Yellow River - Judith River

MA-KO-YI-STA-KI-TSI - Wolf Mountains - Little Pwl'<

KA-YI-SI-SA-TAH - Bear River - Marias River

I-NUK-KI-TA-TAH - Little River - Milk River

OM-KI-TA-TAH - Big River - Missouri River

SC-KS-TSI-SI-SA-TAH - Shell River - Nemahbell River

A-SA-TO-SIS-MA-KI-TA-TAH - North Big River - North Saskatchewan River

NA-PI-SI-SA-TAH - Oldmans River

KA-SKAP-SI-STA-KI-TSI - Porcupine Mountains

PO-KO-KAH-SI-SA-TAH - Elk River - Red Deer River

OTS-KA-KSI-SI- - Green Banks - St. Marys River

SPA-TSI-KO - Sandy Hill - Sandy Hills

SOO-SKA-PO-MA-KI-TA-TAH - South Big River - South Saskatchewan River

KOOH-I-STA-KI-TSI - Snow Mountains - Snowy Mountains

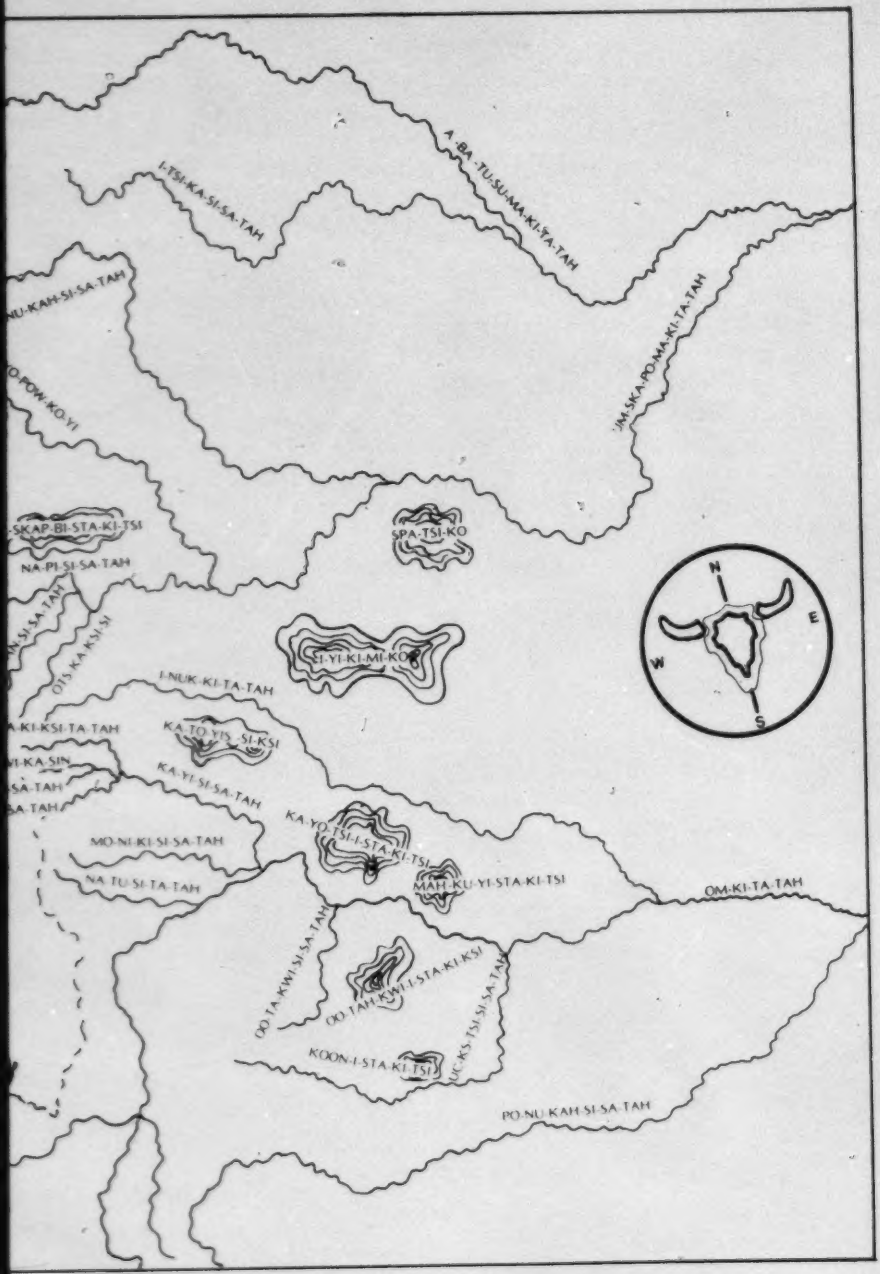
NA-TO-SI-TA-TAH - Sun River

KA-TO-YIS-SI-KSI - Sweet Pine Hills - Sweet Grass Hills

NO-KI-KI-SI-SA-TAH - Breast River - Teton River

NA-TO-KWI-KA-SIN - Two Medicine Lodges - Two Medicine River

PO-KO-KAH-SI-SA-TAH - Elk River - Yellowstone River


A-BA-TU-SU-MA-KI-TA-TAH
I-TSI-KA-SI-SA-TAH
JM-SKA-PO-MA-KI-TA-TAH
SPA-TSI-KO
SI-YI-KI-MI-KO
I-NUK-KI-TA-TAH
KA-TO-YI-SI-KSI
KA-YI-SI-SA-TAH
KA-YO-SI-I-STA-KI-TSI
MAH-KU-YI-STA-KI-TSI
OM-KI-TA-TAH
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NA-TU-SI-TA-TAH
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OO-TAH-KWI-STA-KI-KSI
KOON-I-STA-KI-TSI
PO-NU-KAH-SI-SA-TAH
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Making Soup

When the Blackfeet went on hunting trips, they usually sent the young men — fast and able men. When these men came back with their meat from a hunting trip, the chief, or what we call the leader of the group, usually called a small gathering.

This meant the chief would have berry soup made with blood of the game they had killed. They mixed the blood with berries. There were no cups in those days. And the only way they could boil soup was to dig a hole in the ground, just so deep, a round one, and they placed rocks around it. They also placed a fresh piece of rawhide in the hole. When that was fixed, they made a fire on both sides and they dropped hot rocks, one-by-one, into the pit with the rawhide. This way they heated the berry soup. The berries and blood were put in the rawhide at the same time. And that was the old way of making berry soup.

A Place Called Things Being Written*

Okee! I am going to tell you of people of a long time ago.

This side of Sweet Grass Hills there was a place called Things Being Written. The Indian word for this sacred place means a Place Where A Warrior Stops And Looks On The Sandstone Wall And Sees Himself.

In those days, a warrior saw whether he was going to die or live a long life. These things were written by a spirit. This writing was in the form of a figure — for example, a person.

People in those days said that is how things were and who did the writing on the wall. But now there are arguments about the writing. I have been there myself. Old Jim White Calf and I were there.

Old Jim White Calf said that this was not the one, it was up towards the mountains. And that is where it was at one time, by a place called Boss Ribs Pass**

*Writing On Wall, on the cliffs of the Milk River near Aden, Alberta.

**This pass is northeast of Shelby, Montana.

War Party

Once again, I am going to tell about when the old timers would go on war parties.

Everybody would know a war party was going out by the singing around the camp. When the singers would stop at a teepee of a chief, then the people would know a war party was going on. They called this song they sang at the teepee of the chief, the Canvas Song. It is a war song.

As the warriors would go around singing, more men would join them. The ones that joined the singing warriors were volunteering to follow a certain leader.

As I say, when these people went around singing, they would stop four times. These were really good songs. The men who joined up during the singing, would get ready to go on the war party when they went home that night. Right away women: wives, mothers and grandmothers would sew them pairs of moccasins. Every warrior would pack extra pairs of moccasins for his trip. **They mostly walked when they would go to the enemy.**

Whenever they were going east, they went to Black Springs* first. They would stop at this sacred place. As they did not have any wood to burn they collected buffalo chips. This was the fuel for their fire.

From Black Springs, they went to a place called Boss Ribs Pass* From this place, they went north to the camps of the Bloods and North Pikuni. Some of these people joined with the Pikuni and they all traveled back to this place called Boss Ribs Pass.

They were on a war party against the people known as the Furthest Group, the Assiniboine.

Along the way, the war party killed deer and antelope. **We cannot say how long they would go on these trips back in those days. Some were gone for ten to fifteen days at a time. As we know, they walked**

*Southeast of Cut Bank.

on those trips. These trips were not the traveling we do today. They had to hide and be prepared at all times.

The war party finally made it to Wolf Point. The Pikuni and the North Pikuni and Bloods were sitting and hiding not far from the enemy, waiting for the night to come.

When the time came, they charged the camps of the Assiniboine. The Assiniboine knew that the Pikuni would steal their horses at any time, so they prepared for them by putting their horses in a corral. So these Pikuni and their relatives did come to this nice group of horses and they tore down the corral. They picked the finest and best horses to ride home. And they freed the others. Then the war party started back for home, by the way of what is now called Milk River.

They were on their way to the strange place where there was writing on the sandstone along a creek. This strange writing by the spirits showed when and where a warrior would be killed.

From there, the war party returned by way of Sweet Grass Hills and Boss Ribs Pass, then on to a place known as Red Paint Coulee what is now known as Shelby, and from there to Black Springs*. From there, the party followed the coulee toward the mountains. In those days, the people wintered at a place called Bear Creek.

When the warriors came back with the horses they took from the enemy, they painted their faces to show how brave they were. They sang a victory war dance song and the people knew they were back from their war party.

*Willow Rounds on the Marias River.

My Old Man

Okee! Once again I am going to tell you people a short story about my old man.

One time he and a friend started out from Bear Creek to look for the enemy. As they traveled along, now and then they would hide in a clump of bushes or a coulee as they did not want the enemy to see them first.

As they went along, they came upon a small herd of antelope. One of the antelope thoroughly deceived the two men: One antelope appeared to be sitting but when they took aim at it — just as they were about to shoot it — it became petrified. It turned to a rock. That was one of the unbelievable things that happened to these two men on their trip.

They went on to a place of springs and from there to a place called Boss Ribs Pass*. **Blackfeet People who traveled to visit the Assiniboine People at Fort Peck said Boss Ribs was along a safe path.**

They traveled on from Boss Ribs until they came to a place where they expected to find some people. They were very scared at the time. But the enemy had left earlier. My old man and his friend stopped at this place, and then they started on, traveling to the first hill of the Sweet Grass Hills.

When they arrived at the middle hill, they climbed to the top to scout for the enemy — who might be the Crees or the Assiniboine. They looked for the enemy for two days, and the next day they spotted the enemy. One of them said. "Look! There is something across the river." Then his friend looked through his field glasses. They are not buffalo over there," he said. "They are people and pack horses. They might be hunters."

After it got darker, they started down to the river. Their dog ran ahead and when the two men reached the enemy camp, the dog was there. The two men searched in the dark for the pack horses. When they

*Northeast of Shelby, Montana.

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found them they were grazing. Their front legs were hobbled, so the two Blackfeet cut the ropes that were used to tie their front legs. They rounded up the horses and started for home by the way of Writing on the Wall. From there, they rode toward Red Paint Coulee and then they went to Black Springs, then down over the hill to the Circle Brush.

As they were riding along with all the horses, my old man asked his friend, "Who owns this dog?"

And the other one said, "My grandmother owns that dog."

Then my old man said, "I am going to give the dog to the old lady, and she can give it to whoever she likes."

That is the way my old man made this dog a war party leader.

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Bear Chief Gives Land

Okee! One time the man named Running Crane came to where the Pikuni used to have their agency. The people at the agency were there to decide where to put a new school building.

The people talked awhile and then they decided to go see the old man called White Calf. They thought he might help them find a place. From there, White Calf took them to look for land. They were still looking for the right place when this Government man came and told the people that they should go back to Two Medicine River where Bear Chief lived and look some more for a place that was suitable for a school.

So when they got to the place of old man Bear Chief, he told the government agent and the people that the ones who helped the Pikuni were the Fathers*.

Old Man Bear Chief told the group and also the agent that near where he lived should be the place to build a school and also a church so the children could learn about praying.

Old Man Bear Chief gave the priests some of his land.

Some people say that was tribal land **where the school and church were built.** But that was really the land of Bear Chief that they measured and gave to the Fathers away back.

*Fathers refers to Roman Catholic Priests who were looking for land to build a church and school to "christianize and educate" the Blackfeet. The land that Bear Chief gave is the current site of the Holy Family Mission.

Fencing The Reservation

Okee! I am going to tell about when the Federal Government fenced our reservation, the Blackfeet Reservation. I was very small at the time.

When the survey began, Rutter Wood and Levi Burd were made foremen. The understanding was that the new fence would be built along where the old fence went. But they built it along a different line and we were cheated by our so-called Government.

At first, when it was decided to rebuild the fence, some old men and their wives started to rebuild the fence. They dug postholes.

The fence was to be built down by the north corner near what the Indians called Where-The-Berries-Are-Mashed, northeast of Cut Bank and to the south — over on the other side of Birch Creek — that was the line agreed to. But again we were cheated! They built it on this side of that line. The Government took all the land between those two lines and gave us nothing. They paid only for the rocks. Even today, the old people are still disappointed about that.

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About Building The Railroad

Okee! This is about building the Great Northern Railroad across the Blackfeet Reservation. The chiefs those days were promised by the railroad officials that the Indians could always ride the train free. This was when the railroad officials started to survey the reservation for the railroad.

There is nobody today who knows what the deal was. They say that whoever made the deal got only a drink of whiskey out of it.

When the railroad was built through the reservation and over the mountains, it also was not known who gave anyone the right to do so.

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The Children Who Were Left Behind

Okee! I am going to tell about people of away back long ago.

One time, a group of people were camping and the children all went out to play, but one of the boys came back to the camps. He was a lonely and the only child of his family. His parents thought a lot of him. He got anything he wanted.

When he came back to the camps, he told his father that the children he was playing with took his shells and ran away with them. So the old man told the people that they were going to move, right away. And they did move. And they kept on moving for a long time. **The boy thought when he came home the other children would soon come over the hill.**

When the children came home over the hill, they looked and their camps were gone. So they walked through where their camps had been and started to look around.

They found their mothers' bone crushers and scrapers for tanning hides, and they also found a rawhide to carry things in. **The children knew which way their families had gone by the way the grass lay down.**

The children started to cry, saying, "Mama! Look! Here are your rawhide, bone crushers and stone knives."

Then, while they were crying, they heard someone call to them. "Come over! Come over!" So, the children went where the voice of the person was coming from. The voice belonged to an old lady. She lived by the cliffs near where the camps had been. So this old lady said to these children: "You stay here with me." Then she said, "When you go to bed, be sure that you have your heads turned towards the center, to the fireplace."

The old lady told the children that mice were

around, and they would be safe from the mice if they put their heads toward the center of the lodge.

So, when the children went to sleep, the old lady started to cut off their heads.

When she had just about come to this one girl and her little brother — that the girl carried on her back — the little brother pinched the ear of his sister. The girl awoke, jumped up and told the old lady she would do anything if the old lady would not cut off their heads.

Then the old lady said to the girl, "Yes! But you must get that water pail and go get some water."

So, when the girl got to the river, she saw a Water Spirit. The girl told the Water Spirit that if he did not take her across the river, the old lady was going to kill her. The girl told the Water Spirit the old lady who lived by the cliffs had already killed all the other children.

So, the Water Spirit told the girl that he would. If she first would look on his head for ticks, he would carry her across the river.

But the old lady must have got tired of waiting, and she hollered for the girl to come back. Right now! So the Water Spirit told the girl what to say to the old lady. And the girl told the old lady she had been washing her little brother and they were coming right up. **The girl carried her little brother down to the river when she went to get the water.**

Then the old lady said that the girl was taking too long and she was coming down after her.

The girl and her brother were already on their way across the river when the Water Spirit started to throw his back, back-and-forth, and at the same time, he was saying, "I must try to throw you off by moving my back, back-and-forth." When they got to the other side of the river, the girl and little brother started on their way towards where their people were, and the Water Spirit started back towards the other bank.

Then the old lady said to him, "Let me on your back, and take me across, so I can go after those children." Then the Water Spirit said to the old lady, "First, look on my head for ticks. Then I will take you across." He said that she must take the ticks off his head first. So the old lady started to look on the head of the Water Spirit. **When she found a tick on his head, she put it in her mouth to kill it, saying how bad it tasted.**

The Water Spirit must have got mad. He told the old lady to get on his back. Then he started to the center of the river and he turned over so the old lady fell in, and went down the river where the fish started to chew her up. **Pieces of her were floating down the river.**

At that time, the girl and her brother were on their way. She was tracking the people, and she followed the lying-down-grass until she came to their camp. She started to look for the camp of her family, and finally she found it. So she entered the lodge, and she told her mother and father that the old lady had killed all the other children. Then the old man told the others in his group, "Two of the children that we left behind are here."

So the girl and boy were taken and tied to a pole of a teepee. Again, the campers started to move away again, and then they went on. But one old lady was the last one to start to move her teepee, and it was still up when the group moved out. So the old lady started to call her dog. **His name was Shaggy Face.**

"Do not go away," the old lady told the dog. "I am going to leave you a lot of things so you can give them to the children. I sure pity them."

So Shaggy Face ran into this brush nearby. And just as all the people disappeared, the dog called Shaggy Face ran to where the girl and boy were tied up and started to chew the rawhide rope used to tie them. And then he fed the children.

So they started to where the campers were. They

tracked the people, following their signs to where their people were camped, and she told her people that they must go back to the place-from-where-they-moved-away-from-the-children. To the exact same spot.

Then the girl told the people, "My mother and father are gone; they went to a Medicine Lodge Ceremony. But she had cut off the heads of her mother and father because they had left the children behind.

The Woman Who Married The Buffalo

Once the Blackfeet were camping near where they sometimes jumped the buffalo. Such a place is called a pishkun.

When the people got a buffalo jump ready, they built a sort of corral to hold the crippled animals. They built it out of wood,. The hunters used to head the buffalo in one direction — toward the jump.

There was an old lady in the camp who was going after wood. But first, she said: "I shall marry whoever makes the buffalo jump first."

So the hunters chased the buffalo, and the lead buffalo headed straght for the jump; he went over it, and the other buffalo followed. They all fell down.

The next day while the old lady was in the brush getting wood, this fine-looking young man came to the old lady. The young man said, "Let us go on our way."

The old lady asked him, "What makes you say that to me?"

The young man said to her, "Well, you said that you were going to marry whoever makes the buffalo jump first."

The young man said to her, "It will be a shame if you do not accept me, because I left my people behind just because of you." He meant the buffalo. The head buffalo had turned into a nice-looking man.

So the old lady said, "All right." Then she went on with the young man.

After they had gone a short distance, the young man told the woman to get on his back. Just as she got on his back, the young man turned back into a buffalo. The buffalo man and old lady started to where all the buffalo were.

When the buffalo man and the old lady joined a large herd of buffalo, the Blackfeet man heard his

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wife was missing. **He thought, she may have been captured by the enemy.**

So the man began fixing his weapon, a bow and arrow. He made a lot of arrows.

So he started to look for his wife and he went along through a buffalo herd and up a hill. He did not see his wife. So he went on to another hill. Then he sat on this hill looking down, and there he saw a woman among the herd. This man thought that he would go down into the brush and hide until he decided how he could get his wife back.

Then the man saw his wife with her buffalo husband. Both were walking towards the place where the buffalo drank. This buffalo husband told the missing woman, "Use one of my horns to carry water in. If it should make a sound, you will have good luck."

So the missing wife took the horn from him, the buffalo husband. She started for the watering place. When she got there, this man who was looking for her — the Blackfeet man — was hiding by the watering place. While she was getting the water, the horn sounded.

"I have been looking for you. Come! Let us go this way!" her Blackfeet husband told her.

But the missing wife said, "Wait here. Let me go and give this water to him. I will wait while he sleeps and then I will come back.

So the missing wife got the water and went to her buffalo husband. When she got there, he was still asleep.

Soon after, the buffalo husband woke up and said, "You say the truth." Then the missing wife told him. "There was a buffalo, an old one. He was bothering me. That is why your horn sounded.

So the buffalo husband told his wife to look on his head for ticks. This put him to sleep.

She held his buffalo head on her lap for awhile, and then she let the head of the buffalo husband

down real easy so he would not wake up. Then she headed for the watering place where her man was waiting.

"Let us go now while he is sleeping." she told him. They traveled for a long ways.

By this time the buffalo husband was awake. He looked up and saw that the missing wife was gone. The buffalo horn sounded. And that was a signal to the buffalo herd to run in every direction to look for the missing wife.

So the man and woman — the Blackfeet man and missing wife — traveled as fast as they could. While they were running, the woman took off her belt and threw it down.

When the buffalo herd got to the belt, they spent some time there wondering which way they should go. This gave the woman and man time to get a little further. When the herd started to follow again, the woman looked back. She told the man, "They are coming."

She took off her moccasins and she threw them down, and the herd stopped again for a little while.

"Let us look for a tree to climb on." the man said. They ran on a little further until they reached a river and came to a tree. Then they climbed up the tree.

The buffalo herd was right after them. The buffalo kept passing by the tree. But the very last one — an old buffalo bull — stopped at the tree they were on. They looked down. "I will spit on him and see what he will do," the woman whispered to the man.

So, the woman spit on the head of the old buffalo bull and he looked up and saw them. Then he sounded a great buffalo call.

The rest of the buffalo heard the sound of the horn and all came back. They ran at the tree trying to push it down.

The man started to shoot down the buffalo herd with his bow and arrows. He shot for a long time.

When he got through and after he killed all the buffalo, he asked his wife, "Which one was your buffalo husband?"

"You killed him, the first one you shot," the woman said. She started to cry for her dead buffalo husband. She cried a long time.

Then the man said to her, "You must have cared for him," and she said, "True, I did."

The man took his knife and stabbed his wife until she died.

13

One Young Man, Very Fast, Brave and Strong

Once, long ago, a boy was captured by the enemy. His people were camping near Bear Creek*, near Sweet Grass Hills. These people usually stopped and camped at a suitable place where there were buffalo chips to burn.

One day, all the women of the group went to pick berries, and a small boy went with them. They were attacked by the enemy who were waiting for them. The enemy took only the boy, and the women were allowed to return to camp.

So they told the chief the boy was missing. The women told him how the boy was taken. And the chief told his people that they were going to find a brave and able-bodied young man to find this boy. The offering was a Medicine Smoke. Soon one young man, very fast, brave and strong, said he would go and find the boy.

The brave young man fixed his bow and arrow. He gathered together good footwear for his trip. He started out. Finally, he came to a big camp of Assiniboine and that night he went to the camps to search for the missing boy. He looked in each of the many teepees. He did not find the boy.

The Assiniboine were gathered for their annual Medicine Lodge. The Medicine Lodge was already put up, so he decided to go over there and see if the boy was there. When he neared the lodge, he heard someone by the center pole groaning in pain. Standing in the lodge, he looked up and saw a person high on the center pole.

Then the young man made his way up to the person by getting on one of the long poles that reached to the center pole. When he got near that place, he recognized the person as the lost boy. The lost boy also recognized the young man and said, "Yes, I am the one that was taken by the enemy!" **The boy was about eight years old. The enemy put the young boy up there as a gift to the sun.**

*Marias River.

So this young man untied the boy and put him on his back. And he carried the boy down the long pole, leading from the center pole. When they got to the bottom, the young man told the boy to stay on his back, and they started out for their home camp. **It was getting towards morning.**

They went through the camps and, when they went by the farthest teepee, they saw an old lady. **Like the old ladies of their tribe, the old ladies of the enemy tribe got up early.** This old lady saw them. So she ran to her son-in-law and told him, saying, "There is a person carrying someone on his back! They are people from the enemy tribe!"

Quickly, everybody was up and took after the young man and the young boy. But the young man ran toward the teepee of the enemy chief. He was still carrying the boy. **A large crowd of people stood in front of the teepee.**

Then the chief asked the youg man, "What is this all about?" The young man told the chief that the boy had been captured and the parents of the boy were sad and still must be crying. That was the reason he went to look for him.

Then the chief told the young man, "Take four buffalo head skulls and lay them in a row. You are to walk on these four heads. But you are not to move these heads when you walk on them, or they will do something bad to you. If you make it safely, you and the boy are free."

So the young man, with the boy on his back, got ready to walk on the skulls. The young man made four tries by raising one leg at a time. **He was making Medicine so nothing bad would happen.** As he stepped on each head, the enemy people were shouting, telling him to fall, but he made it to the other side. The chief said, "He's got visions."

Just then a young Assiniboine man arrived from the camp below. He said it was important that they keep the boy. "My father is very old," he said. "He is

going to put on his war suit and your prisoner will have to fight my father." So the chief gave his say.

The other chief arrived. He was wearing his war suit and he carried a shield. The battle started. The old chief charged at the young man, and the old chief was about to shoot the young man when the old man was shot. He fell.

Then the young man took off the clothes of the dead chief, his buckskins, and other things he was wearing. Then everyone went home and left the chief standing there.

"That young man has his own way," the chief said. "The old man was killed by the enemy."

Then the young man and the boy went into the teepee of the chief and the chief said, "I have four relations*, and they will each give you a horse to ride. You and the young boy can go home."

The next day, the young man and the boy started for their home camp traveling for many days. Finally, they found their camp. And the parents of the boy were found. The parents of the boy and his friends were very happy to see the boy was safe. The young man told about killing the old chief and the clothes he had.

In return for his boy — his son — the old man gave his daughter to the brave young man.

*Relatives.

The Story of Coyote Man

Okee! I have told about my old man, Many Guns. Now I am going to tell an old story, about a man who was always camping away out, alone with his four wives. He had a way of camping away from others. He never camped where there were a lot of people. Once, when he camped off to one side, he stayed there and did his hunting there. The reason for this, he was jealous of his wives.

One day, his wives decided that they were going to do something about this. He sat on the hill all the time. The women asked each other, "What shall we do to him?"

One said, "We will dig a hole, pretty deep. And we will get some junipers and put them where he sits most. We will pile them on pretty thick and then we will run away.

The old man came home with a lot of meat as usual. He told his wives, "I am going hunting one more time and then will go up the hill where I always sit, and see if I can see the enemy.

So he went up the hill that morning. While he was climbing the hill, his wives were looking at him. They were calling, "You want to watch out! Soon something is going to happen to you!"

When he got to the top, he took his blanket and threw it down over the hole that was covered with juniper and he sat down. **And down he went, down the hole.**

While he was hollering from the trap, his wives pulled out* on their dog travois. **Horses were few those days.** And they said to one another, "Let us look for our people." So they traveled until they found their people, the Blackfeet, who had a big camp.

It must have been about four days since he fell into the trap. The coyotes came. Many times they

*Departed.

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looked down at him. He started to pray, saying, "Help me, coyotes."

When he got through praying, a coyote spoke out, saying, "All right, I will help you. But you are not going to like what you will become. You are to be with us. We will take you with us. You will not go with your people."So the man said, "All right."

Then the coyote put his tail down into the trap and told the man to hold on to his tail.

"I will bring you up," the coyote said. So the man did what the coyote told him. And then he went with the coyotes, far away. He ran with the pack of coyotes. He became one of them.

People were trapping at that time but had no luck. And one man became suspicious. He told others he could hear a person hollering. Others also heard the sound of a person coming from the coyotes. So they asked one of the wives what happened to the old man. She answered, "He went hunting, but he never returned. We have been looking for him. That is why we had to move."

These Blackfeet people, when they checked the traps they set, would find they had been hit. They were sprung. So this one man told others they would watch their traps from a distance to find out who was doing this to their traps. They sat there for a long time. Finally, they saw a pack of coyotes coming over the hill. The man they were looking for was the first to come over the hill taking the lead of the coyotes. They went for the traps, and the man hit them.

The Blackfeet all took after them. The men were riding horseback. Finally, they caught up to the man they were looking for. And they asked him, "Are you the man we are looking for?"

He answered, "True." He begged the hunters to let him go.

So, one said to another, "Let him go. He is not one of us any longer."

Breast of a Person

Once a group of our people started on a war party to a place we call Hot Springs*. When they got there, they made a shelter and camped for the night. The shelter was made of willows.

They were crouching in their hut and they could hear the creek nearby. And also the sound of something in the far distance, moaning in pain.

The leader of the group said to his followers, "One of you — when you return from the Spring with the water — can search for the person, or whatever it is, moaning.

These two young warriors went after water, and while there, they heard the sound again and recognized it as the sound of a person in great pain.

So the two began to search and found the breast of a person. The arms and legs were missing!

The breast of a person said, "This is where I was hit and left behind. The others all ran away to safety. I am asking a favor." He begged them, "Take me to your camp or where you are staying."

This breast of a person said to the two young warriors, "I have been hearing you people and I understand what you are saying."

Then one of the men took his blanket and spread it for this breast of a person, so they could carry him. They picked him up and put him on the blanket. They took him to the camp, where they were planning to stay that night.

Just as soon as the two who went after water brought in the breast of a person, the others looked at him hard. The young warriors jumped back, somewhat scared. Just a breast part! Then the breast of a person spoke again, saying, "Do not leave me. Take me with you where you are going." The leader replied, "All right."

*Yellowstone Park.

This breast of a person then told his story: "We had a battle with Crows at the place you found me. We were badly beaten. That was an awful place."

They prepared a way to carry the breast of a person and started towards Elk Creek*.

After a while, they came to a river where they fixed a kind of a raft so they could carry their clothes across the river and not get them wet. They put the breast of a person on a piece of hide which was tied to the raft. When they were crossing the river, they let go of the hide with the breast of a person on it. It was carried down the river by the current. and finally it disappeared.

Then the party started on the long journey to home.

*Yellowstone River.

About The Author

Tom Many Guns was born December 20, 1894, in a small cabin at the old Home Gun place on Cut Bank Creek. "That log cabin still is standing today." Tom's father was Sam Many Guns, who told many stories to his son, some of which appear in this book. Mouse Woman was Tom's mother. He had a brother and a sister, Joe and Mary, both of whom passed away in the early 1900's.

In 1923 Tom and Mary Little Owl were married. She had seven children by her former husband. They lived on Little Badger Creek where Tom owned and operated a cattle ranch until his retirement in 1961.

In 1958, after Mary passed away, Tom remarried to Margaret Monroe. She passed away in 1976.

Tom attended school at Holy Family Mission and Cut Bank Boarding School. He finished the fourth grade after attending school intermittently for eight years.

Tom has participated in many Blackfeet traditional religious ceremonies. He is a prominent figure in our community.

About The Illustrator

Wilbur Blackweasel has lived on the Blackfeet Reservation all of his life. He is a self-taught artist dealing in Indian and western scenes.

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